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THE WALTERS' GALLERIES.

BY JAMES B. TOWNSEND.

THE completion of the 'new picture gallery in Mr. W. T. Walters' residence in Baltimore, was very wisely made the occasion of a reception most important to the art interests of the country. Mr. Walters has been known for many years as a picture buyer and art connoisseur, whose individual taste and judgment in both the departments of modern paintings and Oriental porcelains are of a high order. It is so rarely in this country that persons possessed of means sufficient to acquire notable art treasures have education enough in the subject and that intuitive taste and discernment which enable them to purchase intelligently without the assistance of professionals, that the collections of Mr. Walters have been invested with an individuality which would have made them interesting, apart from their other special merits. They have been gradually accumulated and carefully secluded as much as possible from the public gaze. This course naturally provoked, until lately, much adverse criticism, especially among the collector's neighbors in the Monumental City, who found it difficult for themselves and friends to obtain access to his treasures. But the result of the great art reception lately held, when the doors of his house and galleries were thrown open to the artistic public, has proved in some ways the wisdom of an exclusive policy, and has silenced the majority of his accusers. He then stated, and the collections as displayed proved his words, that he had awaited the completion of his gallery to exhibit his treasures, acquired after much study and "weeding," as to be in a measure complete and satisfactory, at least to himself. The artists and those other persons interested in art from many cities of the country, who were present by special invitation at the reception, certainly felt to a man that the consummation of the years of preparation, if long delayed, was certainly more than satisfactory, and in their hearts, as with their mouths, approved the collector's course.

The story of the reception has been told at length in the daily press. How cordially the guests were received, how the different foreign ministers, with their embassies, were present from Washington, among them the picturesquely-attired representatives of China and Japan, and how men prominent in the world of art and letters discussed together the masterpieces of Oriental Ceramic Art and modern foreign and American painters there displayed; all this and more the art public are familiar with. The purpose of this sketch is to notice briefly the remarkable collection of paintings which, as completed, is without doubt the most valuable in this country in every way to the artist, the art student and the connoisseur, and as an exemplification of certain phases of French and English modern art in a compact space, is perhaps the best in the world. For the Walters' collection of paintings is that of a student, of one who has not been content, for example, with having one, or at the most, two Van Marches or Alma-Tademas, simply to represent notable and expensive names, but has, wherever possible, as in the case of the two painters just mentioned, secured a sufficient number of examples of their work to give the visitor an opportunity to study their gradual progress or decadence in power, the effect of the influences of other schools upon them; in fact, to feel the whole gamut of their genius. And as in individuals so in periods of American and modern foreign art is the collection notable and valuable.

A fine Gilbert Stuart "Portrait of Consul-General Barry," represents America's famous early portrait painters; a large and characteristic Durand, "The Catskills," exemplifies the early American landscape school; an Elliott "Anthony Van Corlear," a Darley "Indian Trail," and a Woodville "The Sailor's Marriage," stand for the school of American figure painters now passing away; three examples of George Baker, who, as an original American portrait painter succeeded Trumbull, Stuart and Peale; two strong Eastman Johnson's "The Tender Passion" and "A Spanish Woman," testify for American *genre* painters; a characteristic F. E. Church "Morning in the Tropics," for his phase of American landscape art, and lastly, as an example of the most vigorous and most promising phase of American landscape art to-day, a Bolton Jones, which although entitled "Tangier," and a foreign subject, is no con-

tradition, so full is it of originality and promise. As in the case of the American articles represented as in that of the foreign, those works have been chosen which best show forth the artists' powers and wherein possible, as stated above, several are displayed so that an idea of his range may be obtained. There are three Jules Bréton's hung, all exceptionally and equally fine, although, perhaps, the "Sunny Day" will linger longest in memory; two Andreas and one Oswald Achenbach; "The Clearing Up—Coast of Sicily" of the former, a remarkable study of breakers in sunset light; two Rosa Bonheur's "Andalusian Bulls" and "The Conversation," both strong examples; two Clays, four Daubignys, one "Sunset on the Coast of France," an unusual motive and a canvas so strong as to reward the closest study, three De Neuilles, one "The Trenches," his first battle piece, and another a large canvas, "The Attack at Dawn," one of his most stirring and noted works; two excellent Detailles; no less than six superb Diazes one of which, "Cupid Disarmed" is a figure piece, and another "Autumn—Forest of Fontainebleau," is, probably, the strongest in this country; three Dupres, one a marine, another a study of an old oak with fine light effect, and the third, "A Bright Day," glittering in sunlight and with charming feeling of the fields; three Fortunys, eight exceptional Edward Frères grouped together, several Gallaits, seven Jacques to three Mertes, four Plassans, two splendid Ricos; three Schreyers, two each of Vibert and Villegas, one of the latter "Cairo Slipper Merchant," a fine color study, and eleven Zilems. These are the comparatively important paintings in the collection which necessity demands dismissal of with mere mention. What shall be said then of the more famous works the gallery contains? They come thronging into memory demanding recognition which the pen cannot adequately afford. Of the earlier men, Vernet with his "Italian Brigands Surprised by Papal Troops," with its dash and vigorous action, leads the van; Delacroix, with his equally vigorous "Combat," follows; Couture with his splendid "Liberty in Chains;" Décaups with his gloomy and powerful "Suicide;" Calame, whose works are little known here, with his "Yungfrau," and Gleyre with his "Lost Illusions," that most tender and feeling of modern allegorical works, come hastening after.

Of more modern men here is Cabanel's charming portrait of Nilsson as "Pandora," there Chaplin's "Devotion," and Pasini and Fromentin's rendering of the scenes and sunset of the Orient on this side; Gallait's classical and allegorical canvases, Hebert's works clothed with religious mysticism, and on that Jalabert's productions as delicate and finished in conception as in execution.

The Bonnat "Portrait of Mr. Walters" is superior to that of Mr. Johnston in the Metropolitan Museum. Seldom is the expression of pose as well as of form so happily rendered, and the technique is beyond criticism. Space prevents longer mention of the Bougureau "The Flagellation" which comes nearer to being an inferior example than any other in the gallery; of the Knaws "Mud Pies," a charming study of child life; of the two Meissoniers both fair examples, and of the Munkacsy "The Story of the Battle." Of the famous Hemicycle of Delaroche a word must be said. The traveler, who has seen the grand composition which decorates the semicircular wall of the Amphitheatre of the School of Fine Arts in Paris, can behold here the original picture from which that great allegorical work was copied, executed by the artist's brush himself. Delaroche himself said: "If my name is known to posterity it will be through this picture." The subject, the distribution of the prizes awarded to successful talent in the presence of an assemblage of the greatest artists of every age and country from the era of Pericles down to that of Louis XIV., will give the reader an idea of the wonderful skill and talent which could make the rendition of such a subject a success. The picture in itself is a lesson, a lecture, and a means of study, which no artist in art school could supply.

The Millets are five in number, all renderings of his loved theme, the "simple annals of the poor." By what other hand has the "poetry of toil" been so feelingly expressed? In the "Breaking Flax" and in "The Potato Harvest," there is the hard labor with its monotonous grinding burden; in "The Wheat Field" the air breathes a blessing and the sunlight lovingly kisses the toilers; in "The Angelus" the dying day utters its benediction and the bells chime a soft amen to the close of labor as the peasants stand in silent prayer; and in "The Shepherds' Fold by Moonlight" the cool night air can almost be felt as it, too, whispers of peace and rest.

Of Mr. Walters' Corots, by far the best is the

exquisite tender "Evening Star," which in feeling and dreamy sentiment is an unrivaled artistic poem. The noted "St. Sebastian" has not yet arrived. As stated above, the collection is especially rich in Van Marckes, and a careful study of the six superb examples shown, from the large and vigorous broadly-handled "Pasture Scene" through the delicious tone studies of "Misty Morning" and "Early Morning" to the carefully finished delicate "Pool," will set many minds to wondering whether Troyon's famous pupil does not, in some ways, surpass his master.

Passing by the Baron Leys' "Edict of Charles V." with its remarkable composition and rendering of figures and expression and its strong dramatic power, the Geromes and Alma Tademas, which more than all others held the attention of the visitors at the reception, save only the Rousseaus, are reached. Of the four Yéromes, two "On the Desert" and "Diogenes" are comparatively unimportant, and two "The Duel After the Masquerade" and "The Christian Martyrs" are among the strongest the artist's brush has produced. The former of these, that stern moral lesson of the "wages of sin is death," is too well known to call for description; but the latter has never been publicly shown before in this country. Never has the "cruelty of man to man" been more powerfully depicted on canvas. The low color key of the painting brings the very elements themselves, the cold gray sky and dark wind clouds into harmony with the almost inconceivable cruelty of the Roman populace. Tier above tier rise the great seats of the Circus Maximus thronged with thousands upon thousands of Roman citizens. In the right foreground are huddled together the band of Martyrs, young men and children, old men and maidens, around an aged patriarch, who with flowing white beard and uplifted hands leads them in the last prayer. In the middle foreground stands, in full relief, an immense lion, just released from an underground cage, from which are just seen issuing behind him the foes of another of his kind and of a huge tiger. Confronted by the hard light of day and the hundred thousand spectators, he halts astonished in his stride, every muscle quivering and with majestic head aloft. It would seem as if nothing else were wanting to complete the horrors of the scene. Not so—on crosses placed at intervals around the amphitheatre are bodies burning with liquid yellow flames. Smeared with pitch and with a bundle of fagots underneath them they are human torches. Four in the right foreground have not yet been set on fire, and the expression of wild despair on their countenances is terrible to witness. The whole canvas is a powerful and never-to-be-forgotten tragedy.

It is a relief to turn from the Geromes to the works of Alma Tadema, the painter of the realism of ancient life. Passing by the examples of his early and middle period, his "Sappho" and "Claudius" first demand notice. Of the former, it is difficult to speak in moderate terms of praise. "Burning Sappho," nor Alcaeus himself, never wrote a more perfect poem than is the story of their dalliance of early days here depicted. Alcaeus the poet, seated in the right foreground, sings to the lyre to a group of maidens opposite. Sappho herself, the foremost of the group, leans forward intently listening, and her soul and that of the poet meet in one another's eyes. Beside her stands a maiden crowned with laurels, and behind them on the hard marble seats so wonderfully rendered, of the semicircular theatre, are seated in various attitudes, three other maidens. The power of music and of song pervades the scene. With dreamy, far-away expressions they yield themselves to all impulses of soul and sense. Through the gnarled branches of an olive tree the blue sea stretches away until it blends with the horizon. The atmosphere, the feeling of summer beneath an Eastern sky, are rendered as wonderfully as are the pose and expression of the figures, the texture of their clinging robes, and the marble seats whereon the figures rest. The "Claudius" is a drama as powerful in its way as the "Sappho." The prostrate form of the dead Emperor, the rude Prætorian guard, the terrified Claudius hailed an unwilling ruler—all are blended with a power and feeling that fasten the spectators' gaze. "If this be realism, let us have more of it," exclaims the visitor.

Of the Rousseaus shown, incomparably the finest as it is, probably, the artist's best work, is "Le Givre," that rendition of Nature's solitude which proved how closely Rousseau had penetrated her secrets and grasped her story.

